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Presidential Address Plots Future Direction of AFA

Address given at the 16th annual convention
of the American Federation of Aviculture
by Jack Clinton-Eitniear, president

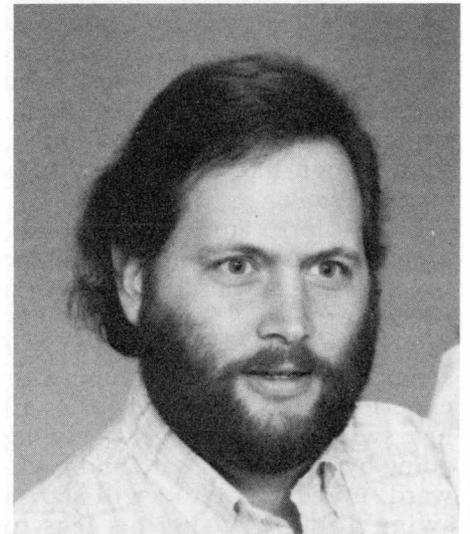
Towards 2040

A consignment of 16 small green parakeets with bright yellow heads arrived at the Cincinnati Zoo sometime during the 1880s. The exact date is not recorded but the cost, per head, was said to be \$2.50 each. Among them was a pair named Lady Jane and Inca who would live 32 years in the zoo and attain the distinction of being the last of a species. The Carolina Parakeet was *common*. They could be seen flying over snow covered fields in Albany, New York as well as in the swamps of South Carolina and Florida. Even the renowned John James Audubon felt they were in no threat of extinction as he "procured a basketful of them with a few shots in order to choose specimens for his drawings."¹ There were occasional breedings in captivity but it was stated "why should one endeavor to breed such a common bird?" You know the rest of the story regarding this now extinct parakeet.

On September 23 through 27, the AAZPA will hold their annual convention. The theme this year is "A Decade of Decisions: Leadership for the '90s." While this would certainly be an appropriate theme for AFA as well, I propose a similar one called "Towards 2040." Given that captive populations should be managed for multiple generations, 2040 puts us 50 years from now. I suspect at that time many species, not being currently imported, will either be self-sustaining or inbred and aged thus unacceptable for captive management. In 2040, the next generation of aviculturists will be attending AFA conventions. The species available to them will be determined, in part, by actions or lack of action, taken by us, in 1990. Just as the aviculturists in the days of Audubon lacked foresight, all too often this is an attribute of modern day bird breeders. In 1977, a symposium was held at the University of Wisconsin-Madison on "Management Techniques for Preserving Endangered Species."² One paper given, and subsequently published in the meeting proceedings, was by Dr. Ulysses S. Seal. Dr. Seal stated, "Mod-

ern day zoos and aviculturists are faced with the responsibility of developing and maintaining self-sustaining populations of captive wild species and, in select instances, of providing the only reservoir for species on the verge of extinction or already extinct in the wild.

"To accomplish these goals, it is necessary to *develop policies for genetic and demographic management of the gene pools over multiple*



Jack Clinton-Eitniear

generations, to collect data and share it, to continue work on development of methods for enhancement of reproduction, and finally to develop policies and methods for managing problems of surplus production." Thirteen years have passed since Dr. Seal's paper was given and published. How has the private sector done? During a questionnaire taken at the Phoenix convention last year, of 125 respondents, only 55% knew the genealogy of their birds and only a meagre 39% had participated in various census/studbooks.³

During the course of this year and next, the new AFA leadership intends to focus on not only the pressing issue of increasing AFA's membership and enhancing communication between its Board of Directors and its membership but also on enhancing avicultural professionalism through disseminating information on quaran-

tining methods, methods of sanitation, disease symptom identification, record keeping and basic information on the propagation of *common* species. We hope that with the experiences of our current programs with the Green-cheeked Amazon Parrot and Red Siskin we will be able to add additional species to the list. As our goal, we should have at least ten species under management programs by the next convention. Your input and participation is critically important. A handful of high profile aviculturists can't do it all. The entire avicultural community will have to ban together if genetically diversified populations of hundreds, not tens, of species are to be self-sustaining in captivity. Our only chance is to ban together on a large scale and AFA is the best mechanism to do so. Forget the shortcomings of the past. Specialize in a few species, keep good records and participate in AFA's projects. If you have interest in a species without a program, volunteer to start one. An additional major effort will be made in the next year to deal with the issue of smuggling. Fines for smuggled parrots are too small and the public too misinformed as to the possible results of such activities. Above all, let's all work so that none of us will be recorded in history as having a Lady Jane or Inca in our aviaries. . . .

Goals of AFA for 1990-1991

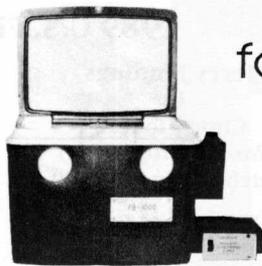
1. To increase membership and enhance communication between its Board of Directors and members.
2. Enhance professionalism by establishing standards for avicultural facilities (e.g., sanitation, quarantine, record keeping, cage design)
3. Establishment of an aggressive program to deal with the issue of smuggling.
4. Development of captive management programs utilizing the newly created SPARKS program as developed by the International Species Identification System.

Footnote

1. Excerpts taken from "Extinct Birds," Errol Fuller, editor, Facts on File Publications, 1987.
2. Excerpts taken from "Endangered Birds: management techniques for preserving endangered species," Stanley A. Temple, editor, University of Wisconsin Press, 1977.
3. Excerpts from "AFA Members Respond well to Captive Breeding Questionnaire," Catherine Allen, Teresa Mulliken and Jorgen Thomson, *AFA Watchbird* magazine, Vol. XVII, No. 1, 1990. ●

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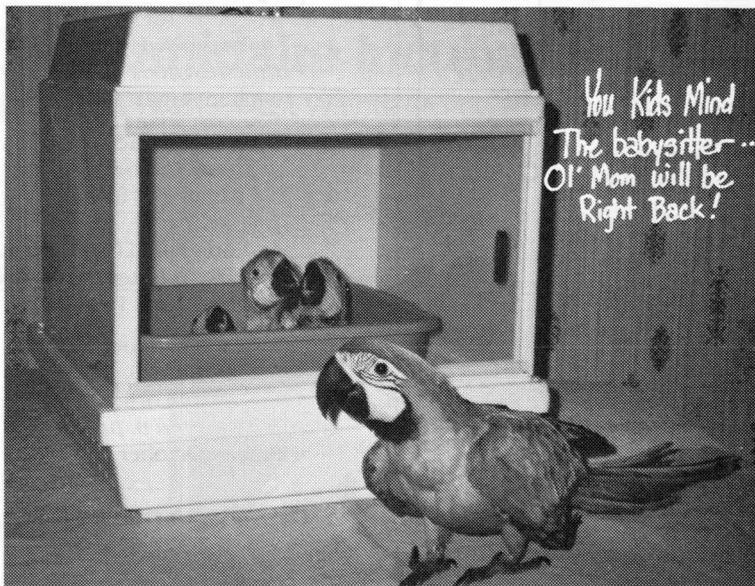
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